

## Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-14 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00

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INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY GENEVA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY MADRID

UNCLAS TUNIS 6445

USEEC ALSO FOR EMBASSY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRD, EFIN, TS

SUBJ: TUNISIAN TRADE FOR FIRST HALF OF 1977: DEFICIT INCREASES

1. (SUMMARY) ACCORDING TO OFFICIAL FIGURES RELEASED THIS WEEK, TUNISIAN MERCHANDISE TRADE DEFICIT FOR FIRST SIX MONTHS OF 1977 REACHED 205 MILLION DINARS (\$478 MILLION), UP 36 PERCENT OVER 150 MILLION DINAR (\$350 MILLION) DEFICIT FOR SAME PERIOD OF 1976. IMPORTS FOR FIRST SIX MONTHS, UP 28 PERCENT, ROSE FROM 301 MILLION DINARS TO 386 MILLION DINARS. EXPORTS ROSE 20 PERCENT FROM 150 MILLION DINARS TO 180 MILLION DINARS. WEAKNESS IN PHOSPHATE EXPORT PRICES AND INCREASED IMPORTS OF PETROLEUM AND OTHER INDUSTRIAL INPUTS WERE MAJOR FACTORS IN DETERIORATION IN BALANCE OF TRADE. (END SUMMARY)

2. MOST (75 PERCENT) OF INCREASE IN IMPORTS WAS ACCOUNTED

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FOR BY PETROLEUM AND PRODUCTS (UP 24 MILLION DINARS) AND OTHER RAW MATERIALS AND SEMI-MANUFACTURES (UP 40 MILLION DINARS). SINCE EXPORT EARNINGS FROM CRUDE PETROLEUM INCREASED BY ONLY 18 MILLION DINARS, TUNISIAN SURPLUS ON ENERGY ACCOUNT SHRANK FROM 42 MILLION DINARS (\$98 MILLION) IN FIRST HALF OF 1976 TO 36 MILLION DINARS (\$85 MILLION) IN SAME PERIOD THIS YEAR. VALUE OF IMPORTS OF CAPITAL GOODS ACTUALLY DECLINED 3 PERCENT

(BY 3 MILLION DINARS). IMPORTS OF FOOD ROSE 27 PERCENT (BY 8 MILLION DINARS--3 MILLION FOR INCREASED CEREAL IMPORTS) AND OTHER CONSUMER GOODS IMPORTS ROSE 33 PERCENT (BY 16 MILLION DINARS).

3. UNFAVORABLE FACTORS FOR EXPORT EARNINGS WERE 39 PERCENT (5 MILLION DINARS) DECLINE IN VALUE OF MINERAL EXPORTS (OTHER THAN PETROLEUM) AND 12 PERCENT (3 MILLION DINARS) DECLINE FOR FOOD EXPORTS (INCLUDING OLIVE OIL, CITRUS, WINE, CANNED FRUIT AND VEGETABLES). WEAK PHOSPHATE AND FERTILIZER PRICES HURT. PHOSPHATE ROCK EXPORTS ACTUALLY INCREASED SLIGHTLY IN TONNAGE, BUT DECLINED SHARPLY IN VALUE FROM 11.1 MILLION DINARS (MD) TO 4.4 MD, AS AVERAGE PRICE DROPPED FROM 14.3 DINARS (\$33.32) TO 5.3 DINARS (\$12.35) PER TON. FERTILIZER EXPORTS ALSO ROSE SLIGHTLY IN VOLUME (PHOSPHORIC ACID WAS DOWN, SUPER-PHOSPHATES UP) BUT DECLINED IN VALUE FROM 16 MD IN FIRST HALF OF 1976 TO 14 MD IN SAME PERIOD THIS YEAR. ONE BRIGHT SPOT IN EXPORTS WAS 78 PERCENT (16.4 MD) INCREASE IN VALUE OF CONSUMER GOODS--ALMOST ALL OF THIS INCREASE BEING IN GARMENTS AND CLOTH.

4. FRANCE REMAINED BY FAR THE LARGEST TUNISIAN SUPPLIER AT 116 MD--WELL AHEAD OF WEST GERMANY (50 MILLION DINARS) AND ITALY (41 MILLION DINARS). FRANCE NARROWLY MOVED AHEAD OF ITALY AS TUNISIA'S LEADING CUSTOMER AT 33 MILLION DINARS. (TEXTILES PRE-SUMATOTL BEUNT FOR 6 MD INCREASE IN FRENCH IMPORTS.) TRADE DEFICIT WITH FRANCE REMAINED BY AFAR THE LARGEST BUT DROPPED UNCLASSIFIED

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IN ABSOLUTE TERMS JUST BELOW 84 MD DEFICIT REGISTERED IN FIRST SEMESTER OF 1976. EC COUNTRIES OVERALL TOOK NEARLY 60 PERCENT OF TUNISIAN EXPORTS--BUT THEY SOLD TUNISIA MORE THAN TWICE WHAT THEY BOUGHT, THEREBY ACCOUNTING FOR OVER 135 MILLION DINARS OF TUNISIA'S 205 MILLION DINAR DEFICIT. (TUNISIA'S RELATIVELY USMALL TRADE WITH U.S. AGAIN PROVIDED 6 MILOION DINAR SURPLUS FOR FIRST HALF, WITH EXPORTS TO U.S. OF 22 MD-- PREDOMINANTLY CRUDE OIL--VERSUS IMPORTS OF 16 MD.)

5. COMPLETE TRADE FIGURES JUST RELEASED BY GOT FOR 1976 SHOW GLOBAL DEFICIT OF 318.5 MILLION DINARS RESULTING FROM IMPORTS OF 656.7 MD AND EXPORTS OF 338.3 MD. TRADE WITH U.S. YIELDED TUNISIA 1976 SURPLUS OF 5.7 MD. EXPORTS TO U.S. RAN 46.5 MD (44.9 MILLION MD FOR CRUDE PETROLEUM, 0.6 MD FOR OLIVE OIL). IMPORTS FROM U.S. TOTALLED 40.8 MD (INCLUDING 10 MD FOR NON-ELECTRICAL MACHINERY, 9 MD FOR CEREALS AND 9 MD FOR AIRCRAFT AND RELATED EQUIPMENT). WE ARE TODAY POUCHING STATISTICAL PUBLICATION ("STATISTIQUE DU COMMERCE EXTERIOR: ANNEE 1976"). FURTHER ANALYSIS TO FOLLOW. MULCAHY

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